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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



INDIGENOUS FAMILY, MAI-NDOMBE, DRC

PHOTO: ROBERT E. MOÏSE

ENGAGING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

A Guide for CARPE Staff and Partners

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FOREWORD

Engaging Indigenous Peoples as Authentic Development Partners

The United States Agency for International Development’s Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (USAID/CARPE) is delighted to present its *Guide to Engaging Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities*. The Guide is informed by CARPE’s longstanding programming in the region, consultations with Indigenous Peoples and implementing partners, and a review of best practices aligned with the Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (PRO-IP). CARPE has invested in Central African landscapes and people since its inception in 1995 and this Guide is created as a resource for USAID staff, partners, and the wider development community with the aim of encouraging deep understanding and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous Peoples are vital partners in the future of the region and in global conservation efforts yet are among the most marginalized populations in Central Africa, which places them in situations of extreme vulnerability. The Guide provides avenues for deep engagement through an understanding of the history and culture of Indigenous and local communities in the region and recommends ways to best learn from and partner with them. Given increasing challenges and pressures on the environment which necessitate sound programming and development approaches, enhancing partnerships with Indigenous Peoples is a necessary step towards long-term sustainability, responsible environmental stewardship, and self-reliance. We hope that you use and share this Guide in your work.

Robert Layng

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United States Agency for International Development

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BCE	Before the Christian Era
CAR	Central African Republic
CARPE	Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEERC	Conservation through Economic Empowerment in Republic of Congo
CFC	Community Forestry Concession
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
CLA	Collaborating, Learning and Adapting
CMM	USAID Office of Conflict Mitigation and Management
DNH	Do No Harm
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights and Governance
EMMP	Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan
FABS	Forestry and Biodiversity Support Project (CARPE project)
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
ICCN	Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de Nature
IP	Indigenous People
IPLC	Indigenous People and Local Communities
IUCN	World Conservation Union
IWGIA	International Work Group on Indigenous Peoples
LC	Local Communities
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (Plan)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PA	Protected Area
PPL	Policy, Planning and Learning (Bureau at USAID)
PRO-IP	USAID Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
RBA	Rights-Based Approach
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries
RFP	Request for Proposals
ROC	Republic of Congo
SL	Sustainable Landscapes
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNREDD	United Nations facility for REDD programming
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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I PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDE

This Guide is designed to support the work of the U.S. Agency for International Development's Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (USAID/CARPE) in effectively engaging and partnering with Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and local communities (LCs) to conserve biodiversity and mitigate the impact of climate change through Sustainable Landscapes (SL) programming.

IPs are largely culturally distinct and particularly disadvantaged in the Congo Basin, as described below, but other ethnic groups have close ties to IPs and are key actors in conservation and combating climate change. Thus, the Guide will use the term IPLCs when referring to engagement of the wider community, taking care to identify the distinct concerns and needs of IPs.¹

The Guide aligns with the objectives of the Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (PRO-IP) (Box 1) providing complementary information and programming recommendations concerning IPLCs in Congo Basin. It recognizes that the circumstances of IPLCs in the context of conservation and climate change mitigation are not static but indeed highly dynamic. Also, that attitudes, actions and impacts are not uniform. There can be major differences among communities and individuals depending on social status, gender, age and opportunity. Hence please consider this Guide as an introduction. Take time to gather your own experiences of the richness and diversity of IPLCs on the front lines of conservation and climate change.

Section II presents concerns and opportunities driving the interest in producing this Guide. Section III covers definitions and a brief history of forces shaping the situation of IPLCs today. Section IV proposes principles and best practices of engagement based on international and local experience. Section V offers suggestions on IPLC engagement throughout the USAID program cycle and within key thematic areas. Section VI presents concluding thoughts. The audience for this Guide is CARPE and other USAID staff involved in the CARPE program as well as CARPE implementing partners, other donors and stakeholders in the CARPE network.

¹The Congo Basin areas covered are the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Republic of Congo (ROC), Gabon, southern Cameroon and southern Central African Republic (CAR) but largely DRC and ROC. This document does not have the scope to advise on engagement of pastoralist communities (e.g., the groups called Peul or Mbororo) in these countries, although they are considered Indigenous Peoples.

BOX 1: OBJECTIVES OF THE USAID POLICY ON STRENGTHENING THE RIGHTS INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

- Strengthen engagement with Indigenous Peoples to safeguard against harm and support their development priorities and self-reliance;
- Increase the integration of Indigenous Peoples' concerns across all sectors of USAID's portfolio of investments and promote cross-sectoral development approaches;
- Empower Indigenous Peoples and their representative organizations to advocate for, and exercise, their rights and practice self-determined development; and
- Foster an enabling environment for Indigenous Peoples to advocate for, and exercise, their rights.

II BACKGROUND

In recent decades, conservation action in the Congo Basin has expanded significantly, with the creation of new Protected Areas (PAs), the emergence of community forestry, the rise of climate change mitigation initiatives, and other efforts. While there have been significant advances in protection of wildlife and ecosystems from this investment (Maisels et al. 2013) there has also been an increase in conflict between conservation initiatives and IPLCs living in and around conservation areas. Conflict is driven by displacement in the creation of PAs, accelerating pressure on IPLCs living within and near PAs from natural resource extraction such as mining and the commercial charcoal and bushmeat trades, continued exclusion of IPLCs from PAs and by failure to adequately engage IPLCs in planning and benefit sharing. In some cases, conflicts have resulted in fatalities, while, in others, serious human rights abuses are alleged (The Guardian 2020). How to mitigate conflict and improve human rights has thus become an important concern for the practice of conservation in the Congo Basin.

At the same time, there has been a growing global recognition of the efficacy of the conservation practices of IPs, which, in many cases, have been shown to be more effective than those carried out in state-administered PAs (Barrow et al. 2016, Pyhälä et al. 2016, Tauli-Corpus et al. 2020). While there have been few areas designated for community or Indigenous People's conservation in the Congo Basin (see page 13 for two examples), there are many opportunities to deploy local knowledge and practices within community forestry as well as through stronger IPLC engagement in PA management.

Two policy developments also have direct implications for CARPE's engagement with IPLCs. First, the US Foreign Affairs Appropriation Act 2020 (p. 61) states, in part, that "funds made available for national parks and protected areas should only be made available if agreements for the obligation of funds between implementing partners and the Department of State and USAID include provisions requiring that: (1) information detailing the proposed project and potential impacts is shared with local communities and the free, prior, and informed consent of affected indigenous communities is obtained in accordance with international standards." USAID also recently issued PRO-IP (Box 1), whose goal is to ensure that "USAID staff and implementing partners engage Indigenous Peoples as meaningful partners in development processes, safeguard against harm, and enhance their ability to promote their rights and determine their own development priorities" (USAID 2020).

This new policy environment aligns with CARPE's objective to strengthen the engagement of key constituencies in conservation and climate change action (FABS RFP page 12 and CEERC RFP page 21,

IR 3). Engagement is also critical for peace and security around PAs and in other areas where IPs are displaced and/or engaged in conflict. Reducing conflict, growing local constituencies and respecting rights are important pathways not only for conservation but for achieving overall development objectives in the region.

III INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE CONGO BASIN

WHO IS INDIGENOUS?

While Pygmy groups in the Congo Basin such as the Baka, Mbuti and Twa have distinct ethnic identities, their cultures and livelihoods are intertwined with other ethnic groups that are descendants of the Bantu or Sudanic peoples that migrated into the area over millennia from the northwest (Bantu language group) or from the northeast (Sudanic language group, found only in northeast DRC). Bantu societies have inhabited the region since at least 1500 BCE and likely earlier (Klieman 2003, Vansina 1990). IPs are represented in Bantu oral traditions as the original inhabitants of the forest and Pygmy groups are considered to be Indigenous Peoples in the DRC and ROC, as well as internationally. This designation does not detract from Bantu and Sudanic people's rights as part of LC groups.

PRO-IP acknowledges that the identities of IPs can be complex and provides the following criteria for identifying IPs.

- Self-identification as a distinct social and cultural group
- Recognition of this identity by others
- Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies
- Collective attachment to territories and their natural resources
- Customary social, economic, or governance institutions that are distinct
- Distinct language or dialect
- Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities

In the Congo Basin, not all of these criteria are met by all Pygmy groups—for instance not all have a distinct language—but there is wide agreement that they are Indigenous Peoples.

While recognizing Pygmy groups as indigenous, Bantu villagers, especially those living in isolated and remote localities, may also retain traditional culture and consider themselves to be Indigenous Peoples. The section below on “Navigating IP-Bantu Relations” describes the complex relationship between Pygmy and Bantu groups, recognizing that both are critical stakeholders but that power differentials can strongly impact the engagement of Pygmies. In this Guide, only Pygmy groups are recognized as indigenous and will be referred to as IPs.

BOX 2: WHAT ARE THE APPROPRIATE TERMS FOR IPLCs IN THE CONGO BASIN?

As a shorthand and because IPs use the term, non-IP groups will be referred to as “Bantu” in this document. The ethnic communities referred to as “Pygmies” have many local names such as BaAka, BaMbuti, Efe, Twa. The term pygmy is often seen as pejorative yet some IP groups, such as Dignité Pygmée in the DRC, embrace it. Generally, however these groups are referred to as *Peuples Autochtones* (Indigenous Peoples). The Guide recommends that CARPE and partners consistently use this term for general discussion and use specific group names where feasible and appropriate.

HISTORY AND CURRENT STATUS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Underlying the ecosystems that we see today are traces of huge transformations that shaped them. Learning about land history is an important way to connect with people living on that land. Where people migrated and settled, locations of former kingdoms, sacred sites and ancient battlegrounds are as meaningful to society in Central Africa as they are in the U.S. or Europe. Take time to learn about this history and integrate it into engagement strategies, community forest and land use planning.

For the millennia of human habitation in the Congo Basin, the rich biodiversity of the region was maintained through customary natural resource management systems, including practices such as seasonal hunting bans, taboos and totems used by clans (subgroup of an ethnic group that claim a common ancestor) to mark relationships with certain species (Peterson 2003). The practices of forest farming or shifting cultivation, pottery making, and ironworking entered the region with waves of Bantu migration. Due to new remote sensing technology the impact of these practices can now be seen in the archaeological record, revealing that many areas considered “primary forest” were once densely populated (Livingstone Smith et al. 2017).

What happened to all those people? Starting with the slave trades, which penetrated the region from the west and east, and continuing with the influx of traders and explorers in the 1800s, the peoples and the riches of the interior became commodities for international consumption (Harms 2019). Ivory was a hugely valuable commodity that involved the use of IPLCs to hunt and portage the goods. These trades and the predatory practices of the Congo Free State, the private fiefdom of King Leopold of Belgium (Hochschild 1998), decimated the population further. During the colonial era (Belgian Congo and French Equatorial Africa) the population shifted from remote areas to cities, towns and plantations where they served as laborers. Exploitation of ivory and other forest commodities continued, using IPLCs, especially Pygmies, as hunters and guides.

Virunga National Park was gazetted in 1925 as the first national park in Africa. This park and the others that followed were designed for scientific study of species, ecosystems and indigenous inhabitants. While most indigenous inhabitants were removed from Virunga, other types of PAs permitted human use and settlement. The UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserves, of which three remain in DRC and two in ROC, were designed to incorporate and study sustainable human use. In DRC, Luki and Yangambi remain active research sites. Okapi Faunal Reserve in DRC also incorporates human habitation, including a significant population of IPs. Another category of sustainable use PA, game reserves, until recently hosted expatriate hunters in CAR, deploying IPLCs as guides.

In the aftermath of colonialism, a major impact of the long rule of President Mobutu Sese Seko in DRC was the flight of investors and the collapse of the rural economy. Plantations and factories were abandoned. Road maintenance ground to a halt and bridges collapsed leaving rural peoples stranded. At the same time a system of predatory “taxation” or “*tracasserie*” on the part of state and enforcement agents arose and served as income for these agents (Trefon 2016). In terms of conservation, Mobutu was dubbed “The Great Conservationist” because he committed to protect 15% of the country (New York Times 1972). Yet the process of creating PAs was not participatory and displacement led to sharp debate about the creation of “conservation refugees” (Schmidt-Soltau 2009, Curran et al. 2009).

Rural areas in other Congo Basin countries fare better than in DRC due to investment in roads and infrastructure yet these countries are also heavily urbanized, reflecting ongoing rural-urban migration and concentration of power and economic vitality in cities. Most IPs, however, still live in rural and

remote areas, however, including areas where they were removed in the creation of PAs. An enduring thread of history is the connection that IPs have to these territories, despite displacement and disruption of their previously semi-nomadic way of life. Researchers who have lived with IPs find that they continue to have conservation ideologies and practices and retain critical local knowledge of species and ecosystems (Moise 2020, Peterson 2003). This knowledge is in danger, however, as IPs become resettled and urbanized and also because of conflict, violence and disruption. As such, while they are key partners in conservation, efforts need to be made to value, consolidate and transmit IP knowledge and practices, while respecting intellectual property rights (Smith 2019).

There has been some progress in improving IP rights and well-being. For instance, in ROC, the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples has been constitutionally enshrined since October 2015. Article 16 states that: "The law guarantees and provides promotion and protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples." Other Congo Basin countries have similar laws on the books and there has been a rise of IP activism in the region. [The International Working Group on Indigenous Peoples \(IWGIA\)](#) is a good source of information on the rights and concerns of Indigenous Peoples in the region.

However, overall the situation of IPs in Congo Basin remains grim. According to the [Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee](#), "Indigenous peoples of the [Congo Basin] rainforests are vulnerable to human rights violations and discrimination, including exclusion from education, land tenure insecurity, exclusion from traditional leadership systems, forced labour, cases of slavery, rape of women and girls; sexual abuse by land-owners on farms, very low levels of access to health services, and other forms of insecurity and abuse. The majority of the indigenous peoples in the Congo Basin region do not have national identity cards and their citizenship is regularly questioned."

While associated Bantu communities can fare almost as poorly due to lack of services and infrastructure, inequality is a reality. In a document supporting efforts to create an effective Ebola response, anthropologist Lys Alcayna-Stevens describes Pygmy-Bantu inequalities in Equateur Province and broadly in DRC (Alcayna-Stevens 2018: 2):

"Throughout the DRC, the imbalanced socioeconomic and political relations between 'minority' groups (e.g. Twa, Mbuti/Sua, Aka, Efe) and majority groups (e.g. Mongo, Lese, Ngando, Luba) raise important human rights issues concerning forced labour, discrimination, violence and land rights. In 2007, the DRC signed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Since then, however, no action has been taken to uphold Twa rights. Typically, Twa have no land rights, even if they are "allowed" to hunt in their neighbours' forests."

Figure 1 depicts the locations of IP groups at present and areas that are suitable for their livelihoods and well-being. The Olivero et al. paper that features this map argues that "fragmentation of the existing Pygmy populations, alongside pressure from extractive industries and sometimes conflict with conservation areas, endanger their future. There is an urgent need to inform policies that can mitigate against future external threats to these Indigenous Peoples' culture and lifestyles."

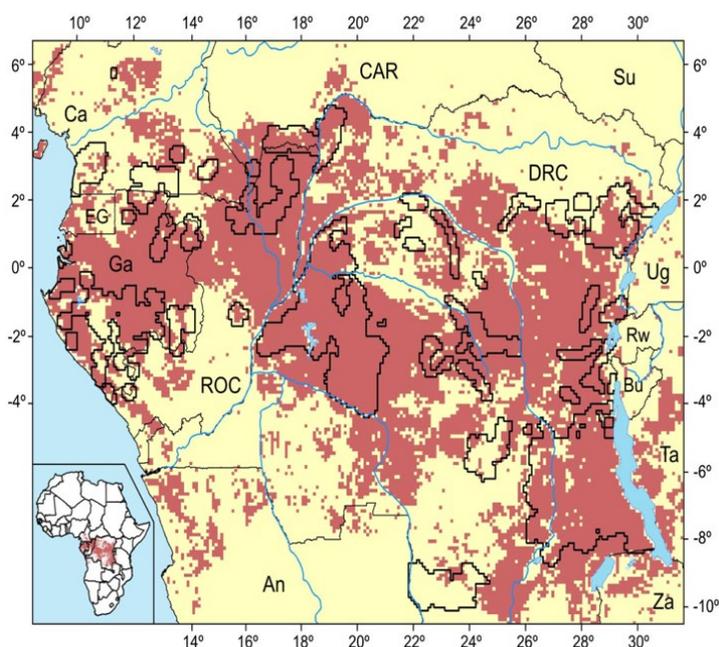


Figure 1
 Distribution of Pygmy groups (within black lines) and areas of suitability (red). From [Olivero et al. 2016](#).
 Open access publication.

IV PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICES

(HUMAN) RIGHTS-BASED APPROACHES²

Adopting a rights-based approach (RBA) to conservation creates the conditions for effective collaborative relationships with IPLCs (Forest Peoples Programme 2019). There is a diversity of RBAs. As the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR and IUCN 2009) puts it in their overview of RBAs, “No one blueprint for RBA emerges. However, there are common themes: supporting both procedural and substantive rights, linking rights and responsibilities, equalizing power relations, providing capacity building for rights holders and duty bearers, and recognizing and engaging with local leaders and local people.” The CIFOR publication goes on to note that while RBAs can support improved governance they are, in turn, shaped by the governance systems in which they operate, as well as by history, politics, socioeconomics and culture. The previous section describes some of those factors.

Within the framework of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) planning and projects in DRC and Cameroon, greater awareness of the tenuous nature of IP rights to land, forest and carbon benefits has emerged as well as how failure to adequately address rights and

² The USAID DRG Center defines a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) according to the United Nations Development Group (2003): “Human rights standards contained in, and principles derived from, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments guide all development cooperation and programming in all sectors and phases of the programming process. Development cooperation contributes to the development of the capacities of “duty-bearers” to meet their obligations and/or of ‘rights-holders’ to claim their rights.”

benefit sharing can lead to conflict.³ As such, RBAs have been proposed for REDD+ the Congo Basin, as outlined in [this briefer](#) from the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

What does implementation of RBAs entail in the Congo Basin context? The first step is for conservation actors to be apprised of the legal rights of IPs and LCs. The InterFaith Rainforest Initiative provides a [useful summary](#) of these rights for DRC. They can then adopt zero tolerance policies with respect to human rights abuses (see Do No Harm below). Projects can integrate the strengthening of rights, for example territorial or land rights, as an objective as discussed in the IUCN briefer cited above. Such an objective will not only improve human well-being, it will enhance conservation and climate change gains through reducing conflict and improving trust and cooperation between local groups and between projects and IPLCs. A case in point is support for IPs to garner collective land rights under community forestry, including strengthening the rights and benefits of IP women and youth within community forestry. Addressing underlying rights issues such as territorial rights can help resolve grievances and thus reduce the risk of future disharmony and conflict.

DO NO HARM AND SAFEGUARDS

The principle of Do No Harm (DNH) is broadly practiced across development sectors. Safeguards, such as USAID's environmental (Reg. 216) safeguards are also common in development agencies and organizations. DNH and safeguards serve to alert program managers of activities and situations that could harm IPs or other stakeholders and guide them in formulating mitigation measures. As USAID currently does not have explicit social safeguards, CARPE should develop, in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, a set of tailored social safeguards to ensure that no harm comes to IPs from project activities. [This](#) review of social safeguards from the USAID Forest Carbon, Markets and Communities (FCMC) project, synthesized to inform emerging REDD+ programs, provides a number of models to draw from. Another example is the World Bank Environmental and Social Framework with explicit guidance on [Indigenous Peoples and Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities](#).

While safeguards are needed, PRO-IP maintains that equal partnership—IPs participating in program design, implementation, and monitoring to inform Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA)—is more desirable than relying only on safeguards and Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

DISPLACEMENT AND RESETTLEMENT

According to IPLCs, the spaces that have been made into PAs in the recent past are their "ancestral homes." To accept IPLCs as partners is thus to accept that they have legitimate ties to their ancestral lands. This is not at all to say that all subsistence activities within PAs cannot be regulated to protect biodiversity. Where PAs have restricted access to subsistence activities and ancestral lands, they should consider pathways to reinstating some access. The ties IPLCs have to these spaces run very deep and are manifested in several dimensions. Furthermore, sacred sites on ancestral lands are employed for a range of uses, including initiating youth, resolving disputes, healing ceremonies, installing leaders and burying and honoring the dead. Forced resettlement and deprivation of access to traditional livelihoods

³ For instance, in Basengele sector (Inongo Territory) DRC two customary chiefs were allegedly murdered for alienating customary land for a REDD+ project.

is a violation of human rights, and complete ban of access the PAs generates conflict, fosters criminal (and corruption) activities, and is ultimately not sustainable.

If CARPE is involved in creating or strengthening a PA, and there is potential for displacement and resettlement of IPLCs, it is imperative to review the [USAID guidelines on compulsory displacement and resettlement](#). In addition, consultation with the Regional Legal Advisor (RLA) is needed to determine how any such USAID investment fits within host country and U.S. law and where FPIC must be applied. It should be noted that for human rights advocates, the displacement means not only physical displacement but curtailment of livelihoods and access to resources. In addition, experience has shown that resettlement is not a one-off event but a long-term process that can present many challenges for IPLCs as they struggle to find and hold on to land and assets that can support livelihoods and cultural continuity across the generations.

Thus, in the context of growing recognition of the rights of IPLCs to customary lands, displacement and resettlement should always be considered a last resort. There are now examples of PAs that have been created without displacement or resettlement, including:

Itombwe Nature Reserve

After initial conflicts between Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de Nature (ICCN) and IPLCs over the creation of the Reserve, the boundaries were redrawn and made "community-friendly." The new Reserve encompasses the customary territories of five communities and is divided into five sectors, each corresponding to the territory of a particular community. In addition, the Implementing Partner has facilitated the creation of "community patrols" (*patrouilles communautaires*), trained by ICCN and a local NGO, so that each community can patrol its own territory.

Kabobo Natural Reserve

With the support of CARPE, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other donors and partners, Kabobo was established in the southern section of the Misostshi-Kaboga massif, an area in southeastern DRC that is of critical importance for amphibian, bird and mammal conservation, including the Kabobo Apalis (an endangered endemic bird) and a population of the Eastern Chimpanzee. Protection of the massif was supported by elders from every village, including IPs such as the Efe ([Rainforest Trust](#)).

Ogooué-Leketi National Park

This new PA in ROC, which CARPE funding supported, was created with the support and consent of all surrounding communities, human rights and development NGOs ([Wildlife Conservation Society 2018](#)). FPIC was implemented and no displacements took place.

FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT

Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is an element of an RBA that has been adopted by many governments, organizations and companies. Implementation approaches and even interpretations of FPIC vary widely. Nevertheless, the practice of seeking consent before undertaking an investment that impacts the lands and lives of IPLCs, and ensuring that consent is freely obtained, has spread because it provides a "social license to operate." It reduces the potential for conflict and for reputational risk.

The FPIC process starts with careful reflection about who needs to be involved. It must also consider how to cover costs, the implications of consent or non-consent and the sustainability of agreements. While there is guidance on FPIC from REDD+ processes (e.g., from UNREDD) and from other agencies (e.g., the International Finance Corporation Guidance Note 7), the FPIC process has to be tailored to local context. According to the USAID's Indigenous Peoples Consultation Handbook, if an operating unit decides to undertake an FPIC process, it should be conducted according to agreed-upon decision-making processes and institutions through recognized leaders and customary decision-making mechanisms, while also ensuring that potentially marginalized members of the community are included. Consent should be clear and documented.⁴ In addition, USAID's Indigenous Peoples Advisor notes that there are two emerging important aspects to be considered in the FPIC process: a) respect for the governance structure of the Indigenous Peoples, which means not only the traditional governance at the community level but also the state-recognized authorities and furthermore the national level representation of IPs in given country; and b) that consent means that Indigenous Peoples will not see their rights diminished or affected or their vision and aspirations for the future seriously compromised.

BOX 3: RIGHTS OF IPs TO THEIR ANCESTRAL LANDS WITHIN PAS

A recent Georgetown Environmental Law Review article (Alam and Al-Faruque 2019) claims that “States are now under an obligation to exercise permanent sovereignty on behalf of their indigenous communities, as well as for the benefit of their citizens as a whole. The exercise of three particular rights of Indigenous Peoples—the right to self-determination, the right to traditional land and resources, and the right to prior informed consent—can help Indigenous Peoples exercise their right to permanent sovereignty within the nation state.”

According to Article 26 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), governments are obliged to respect IP territorial rights. While DRC and ROC ratified UNDRIP, it is not a legally binding document. In the Congo Basin context, CARPE can honor UNDRIP by proposing that IPs have *access to ancestral lands for non-extractive purposes* and that they secure permanent sovereignty over lands for community forestry, agriculture and other purposes.

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF CONSENT

As with land management regimes based on private property, rural landscapes in the Congo Basin are not characterized by free and open access. Rather, they are administered by customary authorities implementing systems of customary land tenure. The vast majority of the surface area of Congo Basin countries is already divided into small, local territories belonging to particular settlements and the customary rights holders living within them.⁵ Thus, outsiders seeking to carry out activities in the rural landscape first ask permission of the customary "owners" of that particular part of it (Myers 1982). Failure to do so will be perceived as an act of trespass that will surely lead to conflict.

⁴ USAID's policy and toolkits on Indigenous Peoples are available at <https://www.usaid.gov/indigenous-peoples>.

⁵ Although customary tenure is recognized within most rural localities, in all Congo Basin countries the state formally owns all land and natural resources and allocates concessions and other land uses.

To take an example from customary practice, if an outsider seeks to fish in the territory of another village, he/she must first meet with the appropriate customary authority that has jurisdiction over it. In the case of the Congo Basin, this is the *chef de clan* or *chef de terre*. If the authority grants access, he/she will be obliged to make a payment (*redevance*) at the time of the initial agreement, with regular payments made in perpetuity afterwards (e.g., a basket of fish every fishing season). However, if the immigrant user abuses the agreement (e.g., by overfishing), the customary authority can rescind it and send him/her



Baka women fishing, Cameroon.
Photo: Robert E. Moïse

away. As a result, the outsider has an incentive to respect the needs and well-being of the local community and adopt behavior appropriate to a well-mannered guest.

Concepts of consent are culturally-determined. In a study of consent processes in northern ROC, Lewis et al. (2008) note that in Western society

consent is usually defined as an agreement between two parties at a single point in time, normally enshrined in a written document, whereas, for rural Congolese, it is defined as the creation of a relationship of communication and negotiation between two parties, based on mutual trust and sharing of information. Thus, when external actors seek to carry out interventions on the lands of IPLCs, local people expect a relationship to be established between the two parties, based on open communication and mutual trust, just as there would be for a visiting fisherman seeking to catch fish on community lands. Co-creation processes recommended in PRO-IP will provide the foundation for open communication and trust building.

But what if the “community” you are dealing with includes numerous ethnic groups as well as migrants? This is often the case where people have gathered for work, for example around a mining or forestry concession. In reality, many communities in the region are complex and people in the region have always been mobile. Individuals, IP or Bantu, can have mixed ethnic identities. Community leaders or some community members can abrogate trust, accepting bribes and patronage for access to land and resources. Some engage in extractive and even violent activities. It takes time to learn how communities are organized, who has authority and legitimacy to represent the collective, and what collectivities (clans, villages) have customary or usage rights to what territories. A systematic approach to learning how local society is organized will pay off in terms of crafting agreements, and ideally partnerships, that do not lead to elite capture or conflict and that endure.



Figure 2
Local customary territories on the Congo River,
near Lukolela, DRC.
Source: Rainforest Foundation UK

Grievance and Redress Mechanisms

When you find long-term disillusionment of local populations around PAs, it is not simply actions on the part of the PA administration that have impacted their well-being. It can also stem from weak communication between conservation actors and the local people. The more open communication and accountability is built into the organizational structure of the PA, the less need there will be for grievance mechanisms, as issues will be met head-on before they can develop into full-fledged grievances.

Grievance mechanisms should be in place that allow locals to contest PA policies and practices that they feel are detrimental to their well-being. These mechanisms should not be regarded as simple "add-ons" to PA administrative structures but should be built into their very design, just as any organization contains mechanisms to resolve disputes.

Where there are not sufficient avenues to air grievances and seek redress, CARPE and its partners should reflect on how to document and authenticate claims, what forms such redress might take and how to operationalize it so it can satisfy local needs and build better relations for the long term.

Models for redress vary widely, from compensation for harm to individuals and families done to crops or persons by wildlife (e.g., in Tanzanian lion conservation initiatives) to large-scale acknowledgement of harm to IPs and integration of their history and culture into conservation efforts (e.g., the Maori of New Zealand). Lessons from different modes of redress can be tailored to the Central Africa context where documentation can be difficult to obtain and verify.

BOX 4: THE WHAKATANE MECHANISM AND OTHER APPROACHES TO CONFLICT AND GRIEVANCE

According to Forest Peoples Programme, which works in the Congo Basin on conflict and peace building between IPs and PAs, the Whakatane Mechanism is an IUCN One Program initiative that supports the implementation of “a new paradigm” of conservation, focusing on situations where Indigenous Peoples and/or local communities are directly associated with PAs as a result of their land and resource rights, including tenure, access and use. The mechanism promotes and supports the respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and their free prior and informed consent in protected areas policy and practice, as required by IUCN resolutions, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

While this mechanism is specifically tailored for issues related to IPs and PAs there are other conflict mitigation and management approaches appropriate to the Congo Basin setting, where conflict involves many actors both local and non-local. One such approach involves People-to-People peacebuilding which can bring members of conflicting groups to interact purposefully in safe space to build social cohesion, empathy, and mutual understanding. Consult with the Peace & Security Office and the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) for further information.

RESEARCH, EVALUATION AND FIELD ASSESSMENTS

CARPE staff and partners need data and information to inform planning, programming and adaptive management. These information needs differ depending on role. CARPE staff will undertake field consultations create relationships, ground truth reporting and for overall learning, while partners will need information throughout engagement. Independent researchers, specialists (e.g., gender or land tenure), and evaluators may also be gathering information for CARPE and partners. While the following advice is broadly applicable, tips are provided specifically for CARPE staff at the end of the section.

Prior to planning research or gathering data, it is essential to first build rapport. Building genuine rapport based on honesty is accomplished not simply by how you approach respondents during focus groups and interviews. It also comes from such mundane activities as, for example, eating with people, drinking with them, going into the forest, attending church and ceremonies. In short, by sharing life's quotidian experiences, you build rapport, you build trust and, in so doing, you solidify relationships that then become the pathway through which information flows and decisions about practical matters are made.

As you begin to collect information in interviews and group discussions, adopt a stance of patience and humility, *listening*, more than talking. Before any formal data collection, organize a round of informal group discussions that engage different sectors of society (IP and LC authorities, men, women, youth in different localities). This will help you to get a sense of the diversity of outlooks. How people frame concepts and concerns in open discussion reveals what matters to them and how they think (Lakoff and Johnson 2003). For example, how do they discuss the forest and their relations to it? What are their aspirations and what does "well-being" mean to them? What are its constituent elements? By what standards do they measure it? Gaining insights into how people conceive of problems, as well as phenomena more generally, can greatly enrich your understanding of both them and the subject matter.

In terms of more structured data collection such as surveys, it is highly recommended that these be designed with local input. A cautionary tale from research in DRC involves the researcher creating a

prepackaged survey in Kinshasa to implement in the countryside, only to discover that the respondents did not understand many of the questions and their responses did not fit within the standardized survey categories. Another survey experience in Cameroon demonstrated that the ranking of issues between IPs and Bantu and within these groups among men, women, youth and older people differed widely.

If analysis of survey data is never returned to the IPLCs that provide the data, the survey has little or no value for them. Thus, it is best practice to allocate time and resources to share and validate survey findings. Further, if data are collected without a sample frame (i.e., with no idea if or how respondents represent the wider population), the data have little utility for science or evidence-based decision-making—a huge missed opportunity given the scarcity of data on IPLCs in the region.

IPLCs in the Congo Basin contain a treasure trove of knowledge that has long been exploited by big game hunters, resource extractors (e.g., miners, commercial bushmeat hunters, artisanal loggers), researchers and conservationists. This knowledge and situational awareness can and should be deployed to better understand threats, species trends and the terrain in general as well as for IP well being. For instance, in the creation of Odzala reserve in ROC, IPs were concerned about encroaching concessions and are credited with identifying biodiversity hotspots and supporting the creation of the reserve (R. Carroll, personal communication). Indigenous intellectual property as well as informants with sensitive information need to be protected in the process of collecting and using this knowledge. There are many resources to help projects understand what constitutes intellectual property and how to protect it. The advocacy group for Indigenous Peoples, Cultural Survival, [details several tools and approaches](#).

Considerations for CARPE staff when undertaking field visits include the following:

- Interview IPLCs independently of the partner, with an independent translator as needed.
- Strive to obtain a diversity of views on topics of interest.
- Ask about what people are doing to improve their communities and environments, not only through the project but on their own initiative. This “[appreciative inquiry](#)” approach demonstrates respect and garners useful insight into community priorities and strengths.
- Inquire about the history of people on the land, both in the past and recently.

BOX 5: GENDER DYNAMICS OF RESEARCH

The ideal research, or engagement, team is made up of mixed genders and competencies. For instance, if you are studying local natural history, a team could be made up of a male social scientist and a female biologist or para-taxonomist (someone who can identify species by local names). In a region where gender-based violence is common, it is critical to ensure the safety of women researchers and informants. Including IPs on the team is highly desirable.



Batwa woman on her way to the forest.
Photo: Robert E. Moïse

NAVIGATING SOCIAL HIERARCHY

Working with IPLCs involves navigating settings with diverse social sectors that possess varying degrees of status and authority, from Bantu village chiefs to IP women and children. How do you elicit the voices of those who often remain "voiceless" in public fora?

In the forest societies of the Congo Basin, political life features various positions of authority, yet there is a strong strain of democracy within many communities. In public meetings, those in authority will present proposals for collective action and attempt to inspire their co-residents to carry them out, but it is up to the assembly as a whole to give its consent, or withhold it, by following through on the proposal or not (Geschiere 1982, Moïse 1992). Note that women and youth roles in decision-making are often less public but can be important in shaping community views on a subject.

The first principle is to respect *everybody*. Respect the hierarchy, but respect everybody else too. To display proper respect to those in positions of authority, where appropriate one greets the chief first, then his notables, and so on. But greet everybody. Reaching out to lower-status actors, such as IPs, women and youth in many contexts, presents its own challenges as often they do not feel comfortable speaking before the community as a whole. Yet status barriers are most strongly felt in public venues, in which actors of varying statuses are present, while, among themselves, IPs and women can feel perfectly comfortable expressing themselves. Thus, the second key is to create multiple venues and structures in which diverse actors feel comfortable, so they can express themselves, brainstorm about key issues, articulate their needs and goals, and develop their own plans and strategies.

As a general rule, it is best to work towards strengthening IP governance structure at all levels and empower them to deal with sensitive issues in a more inclusive way. Only if they agree that the external intervention should carry out surveys or interviews in separate venues, then it would be recommended. Furthermore, some issues, especially those of a sensitive nature, are better addressed in individual interviews than in group discussions. As such, fieldworkers need to consider how to make respondents feel at ease so they can freely express themselves. And they need to be clear about the intent of the meeting and the use of the information.

IP/BANTU RELATIONS

When considering the position of IPs in Congo Basin societies, outsiders tend to focus on their lower social status and interpret it as a product of "discrimination" (Hewlett 2009, Jackson 2003, Survival International 2006, Woodburn 1997). However, in earlier times, the status of IPs as marginalized with respect to other groups was not the norm (Moïse 2014). The status of IPs deteriorated with their diminished role in the local economy and culture and through the loss of access to the forest and its wildlife as well as sedentarization. These shifts mean that IP knowledge about forest resources, and their role as healers, is diminished in some areas. Despite these trends, the realm of forest use and management remains one in which IP inequality is less important, in that IP and Bantu members of the same clan may enjoy equal access to the same clan forest. Furthermore, where IPs are not displaced, they continue to be known as "masters of the forest": purveyors of forest products, but also as bearers of indigenous knowledge and cultural traditions.

Should we view local Bantu and IPs as members of two distinct societies or cultures? Given the great degree to which IP and Bantu lives are intertwined in economic, political, ritual and leisure domains (Rupp 2003), the most fruitful way to view a local setting including both IPs and Bantu is as a single society with a "dual organization," i.e., one made up of two complementary social sectors (Grinker 1994). As a result, in carrying out work with local IPs, you should not attempt to bypass local Bantu and work only with the IP sector. Instead, you should respect inter-ethnic mutuality and work with both groups simultaneously. Maintaining an exclusive focus on the IP sector alienates local Bantu, who feel they are being excluded, and usually creates conflict. Take the time to learn about a group's history, the ties that connect them for example through blood brotherhood, trade or clan identity.

Thus, the best strategy for navigating this inter-ethnic social field is to determine what activities IPs and Bantu can collaborate on together—usually forest-related ones—and concentrate on those. Then, once the needs and goals of each social sector have been determined, you should address these through the creation of separate interventions tailored to each one. The specific needs and status of IPLC women and youth should be considered in devising these strategies.

What can be done in cases of mistreatment and human rights abuses of IPs by Bantu? If these cases involve project staff, disciplinary actions are called for. In general, all USAID projects must apply non-discrimination and, where possible, proactive hiring that is supported by continued mentorship. If such abuses occur in the community, approaches to consider include reaching out to both IP and LC leadership to discuss the issues and brainstorm potential solutions; supporting and mentoring IP leaders through IP associations and networks; and consulting local faith and education leaders about communicating anti-discrimination laws and norms.

IPLC MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES AND REPRESENTATION

The highly democratic character of Congo Basin IP society, as well as that of many Bantu groups, has consequences for management structures and representation within them. A precondition for negotiating any local structures for co-management is to let communities determine for themselves the proper parameters for representation. Thus, based on prior research in creating community-level management committees for community forestry in CAR and DRC, local IPs usually felt that each of the major clans within a village should have their own representatives on the management committee, but that there should also be representation of both genders, i.e., a male and female representative from each clan in the village (Moïse 2019).



Batwa Chef de Terre addressing the community. Photo: Robert E. Moïse

But what if no women or IPs are selected? Quotas may not be the best approach to address imbalances. Imposed quotas may lead to a reduction in the group's authority and legitimacy as individuals chosen through quotas may not be respected. There is, however, good evidence that mixed gender natural resource management (NRM) management groups lead to improved conservation outcomes (Leisher et al. 2016). As such, other approaches to social inclusion can be considered: coordinating with IP, youth and women's associations and community leaders and mentorship of women, IPs and youth to take on leadership roles.

In the same vein, it is not recommended for outsiders to create new groups, especially new groups that will set rules or handle other management decisions. This is because outsiders do not understand the local political realities and do not know whom the community respects and trusts.

While the egalitarian nature of IP society in the region is well documented, these descriptions only hold for local groups and not necessarily for IP associations at a wider level, which may or may not have a democratic structure or strong ties to the grassroots. Also, non-IP ethnic groups do not necessarily have the same egalitarian structures. Traditional leaders can be corrupt and allied with militias or security forces and thus can impose their will on their subjects, as was the case in the Mobutu era in DRC when chiefs allied with the ruling party would fine and jail people for a multitude of infractions.

How can we monitor elite capture and other weaknesses in local decision-making bodies that are collaborators? Methodologies grouped under the term "complexity-aware monitoring," discussed below,

provide approaches to gathering diverse views on the process and outcomes of interventions. Another solution discussed below is to hire and train students, teachers or other qualified people as “local social scientists.” Researchers often hire local students or teachers as enumerators for surveys, but they can do much more. The [SCAPES natural resource governance tool](#) has also been deployed in CARPE landscapes to assess the strengths and weaknesses of diverse NRM institutions.

UNDERSTANDING AND WORKING WITH IPLC INSTITUTIONS

IP institutions can be found at multiple levels, from the village to the region and even those affiliated with international groups. Many other ethnic groups also have national networks although these are much less visible in the development sphere. In addition, there are networks created through religious, alumni or neighborhood affiliation. Understanding the roles and functions of these different institutions is critical for engagement. An [institutional analysis](#) such as USAID DRC carried out in 2015 can help CARPE and specific projects to determine which institutions are best positioned to be partners for specific activities: which have the capacity, legitimacy and authority in the eyes of the target community.

When carried out at the local level, institutional analyses can reveal complex relationships and perceptions about what groups are trusted and respected. As such, relying on the word of a few people about the utility and value of an institution or group is risky. In addition, there may be overall suspicion and distrust of external institutions based on previous experience or lack of knowledge. Within IP or LCs where few people are literate and thus able to undertake leadership and representational roles, extra effort is required to devise engagement approaches that reach the non-literate.

V ENGAGING THROUGHOUT THE PROGRAM CYCLE

Failure to engage Indigenous Peoples in the project design and implementation process often results in Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge, territorial governance and conservation approaches being given less consideration than donor or other external technical approaches. The lack of involvement of Indigenous Peoples in discussions and management options for protected areas can undermine program legitimacy, especially in locations where indigenous territory and customary use demands greater stakeholder collaboration or co-management approaches. [USAID Guidance on Indigenous Peoples and Biodiversity](#)

DESIGN AND PLANNING

Designing projects with little or no input from IPLCs who will be involved in them raises a number of risks. The most critical one is that assumptions made about their behavior and attitudes may be wrong or incomplete, thus the theory of change underlying the design is flawed. Relying on project staff to represent what IPLCs think and believe is not a good solution either, given imbalance in power. Direct lines of communication between IPs and project designers and managers is recommended. Indeed, as PRO-IP recommends, partnership and co-creation should be the aim.

Selecting target groups is an important part of design and work planning. If the planning is to be participatory you need to know who will be involved. Often groups are selected because they are the easiest to access or because they have been engaged in the past. Such selection criteria can bypass critical stakeholders, for example IPs living deeper in the forest. Another issue is the jealousy and discord that can arise with perceived favoritism for one community. In discussion with authorities, consider how to communicate with people and areas that are not directly involved so that jealousy and

conflict do not undermine the project. And remember that Indigenous Peoples need to identify their own representatives.

To plan activities with IPLCs, it is best to start by holding "field hearings" to see what peoples' needs and concerns actually are (Rogers et al. 2014). IPLCs should be in design and work planning phases as they will have a good idea of what the impact of any proposed activity might be. In this way, activities will be pragmatic and attuned to local conditions.

Getting to shared goals is the next step. What IPLCs want and need may or may not align with what CARPE and its partners can offer. For CARPE, activities must contribute to biodiversity or SL results. To uncover connections, a theory of change approach can be used, as has been done in REDD+ planning. It is useful for all parties to consider how a particular action or investment will produce a result. This is not an esoteric exercise that will go above people's heads. They can think through the consequence of actions and also how actions need to be clustered or sequenced to achieve results. They can also help CARPE partners to see the possible risks and benefits of certain investments. Note PRO-IP's requirement for analysis of impact and mitigation measures for potential adverse impacts.

IP well-being in the realms of livelihood (forest products), health (traditional medicines) and culture depends on healthy, biodiverse forests. As such, supporting these aspects of well-being is likely to align with CARPE objectives. In terms of other IP needs, which may be priorities for them (e.g., security, education, health care or market access), an integrated approach is called for. As CARPE builds out the concept of PAs as centers of economic sustainability, peace and security, other sectors are attracted to working with IPLCs in these areas. The peace and security sector is already working in areas in eastern DRC, and the private sector is active in ecotourism in northern ROC.

BOX 6: PLANNING WITH A GENDER AND YOUTH FOCUS

As discussed above, hearing from and engaging all sectors of IPLC society is critical. Women have specialized knowledge and skills and youth are the future of the community. Separate focus groups with women and youth can elicit their ideas about activities, which can then be discussed with the whole group. But make sure that such activities are not "ghettoized." In other words, activities carried out by women and youth should contribute to the overall joint goals. Sewing clubs, youth soccer and the like could be important to some people, but they would marginalize women and youth with respect to working together toward a shared conservation and climate change goal.

Workplans can be developed within community-level co-management structures, but, as noted above, significant decisions about what to do should be approved by local constituencies. Significant decisions include those that involve changes in the rules governing the use of land, forest or other common areas as well as decisions on benefit sharing from projects or investors (for instance payments for carbon sequestered under REDD+) and purchases or installation of communal goods such as water sources, clinics or schools. Refer to the USAID IP Consultation Handbook on providing capacity building to IPLC representation to ensure meaningful engagement and consultation.

Engagement in planning will be strongly shaped by the skillset and commitment of personnel deployed to work with IPs. Scheduling adequate time and selecting the most appropriate venues are critical

considerations that skilled staff will know how to navigate. Trust is the essential ingredient of engagement and thus project teams should incorporate the suggestions of skilled staff not only about choice of activities but about IP decision-making approaches and deliberation timeframes, when and where it is best to meet and discuss ideas and outcomes.

Beyond planning, and especially in areas of conflict, CARPE can consider supporting fora to bring IPs, Bantu communities, and implementers together for sustained dialogue that is monitored by neutral parties. Unequal power relations, lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities, lack of diverse representation and failure to follow through have been constraints to conservation and peace planning and dialogue processes in the past.

IMPLEMENTATION: BUILDING ON IP ASSETS

IPs in the Congo Basin have a distinctly "preservationist" approach to land. As an elder in Cameroon stated: "In terms of land, we consider three elements: the ancestors, the living and the unborn. The land is a gift from the ancestors, which is used by the living to sustain themselves while they are on this earth, but which is then passed onto future generations." The daily life of rural IPs is integrated with the forest environment and their health and well-being depend on healthy forests. As such, the desire to protect the forest provides clear common ground for IPs, local Bantu communities, CARPE and partners. Forest management, forest monitoring, tourism activities, and even customary rituals to maintain fertility, could all be carried out by IPs and, where appropriate, LCs and mixed communities.

PAs in the Congo Basin are referred to as "showcases of biodiversity." Thus, descriptions of a PA begin with listing the unique (and endangered) species it contains. At the same time, spaces made into PAs, as well as many other rural areas in the Congo Basin, are the sites of rich histories (Section II) and contain populations with rich cultural heritages. In keeping with a more inclusive approach to conservation—one that can integrate IPLCs into the fold—this conceptualization of PAs and other rural sites could be revised to include the historical and cultural dimensions of these places. Instead of "showcases of biodiversity," PAs could become "living museums" of nature, culture and history.

As part of this approach, CARPE and its partners could display their good will by supporting the reproduction of traditional culture and indigenous knowledge by:

- Integrating community members in program design, implementation, and monitoring.
- Documenting and presenting traditional aesthetic practices (e.g., music, dance, art), customary practice, and local history to outside audiences. See for example two gorgeous bark cloths crafted by Mbuti women (Figure 3) and listen to the [world-famous polyphonic music of Central African IPs](#).
- Supporting traditional medical practice (a specialty among IPs) and its reproduction.
- Valuing all forms of traditional culture for local enjoyment and external tourism as they are worthy of public celebration. In addition, such treatment would serve to foster local pride in the PA, greatly helping to achieve local buy-in for the conservation effort.



Figure 3
Mbuti (DRC) Women's Bark Cloth Design.
Photo: R. Moïse from personal collection.

Other assets IPs bring to the conservation effort include:

- Because their traditional economies are based on the exploitation of wild resources, IPs possess a vast storehouse of knowledge about the plant and animal species of the forest. As such, they have always played the role of "masters of the forest" and conservation staff in PAs regularly note that they are essential for many of their forest-related activities such as research and ecotourism.
- Their intimate knowledge of their traditional territories, and the fact that their subsistence rounds keep them constantly circulating within them, makes IPs some of the most effective eco-guards of any Congo Basin peoples. In fact, in the regime of tribal warfare prevailing in the 19th century, reconnaissance was one of the primary activities they carried out for their Bantu alliance partners (Putnam 1948).
- IPs are bearers of a rich oral tradition about the forest environment, which features colorful tales of the wide array of animal species inhabiting it (Kilian-Hatz 2002, Kisliuk 1998, Turnbull 1965). Thus, not only can they provide practical benefits to projects, they possess rich cultural resources that embody the Indigenous heritage of the Congo Basin. As such, they are the key conduits for its preservation and reproduction.

ENGAGING IPs IN KEY CARPE THEMATIC AREAS

The table below offers ideas for IP engagement in key CARPE thematic areas. As work in this area proceeds, new approaches will be identified that can be shared widely with the CARPE community.

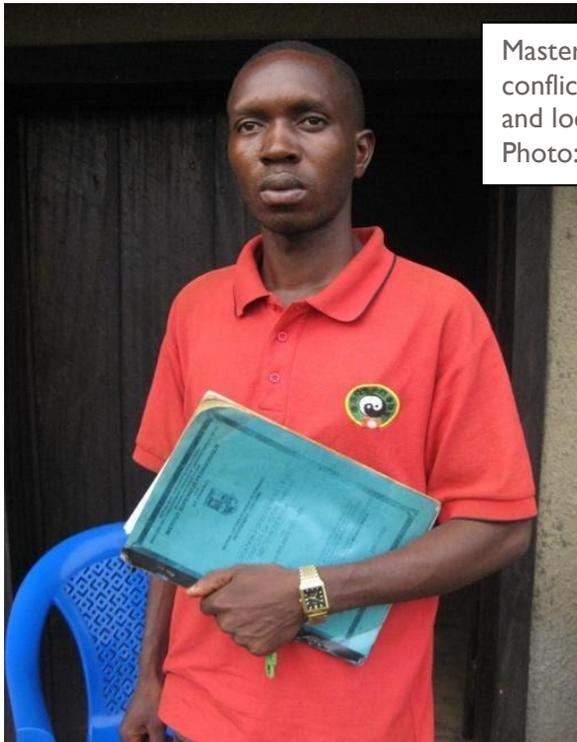
Theme	Concerns	Engagement approaches
Reducing the impact of the commercial bushmeat trade	Enforcement will fall on IPs who are not the major actors (see Fa et al. 2016)	Develop and enforce sustainable hunting zones with IPs (example of Okapi Wildlife Reserve); Support IPLCs to establish community forestry concessions (CFCs) in their customary territories to control the influx of outside commercial hunters on to their lands, combined with support for sustainable revenue-generating activities to reduce incentives for locals to commercialize their fauna; Engage IPs in awareness raising on zoonotic disease risks.
Improving PA management	Enforcement will fall on IPLCs rather than larger players in PA degradation; Access to ancestral territories for cultural use will continue to be denied; Resettlement and livelihood efforts will be ineffective	Promote IPs as PA ambassadors; Integrate culture into PA communications; Increase hiring and mentoring of IPs (as managers as well as eco-guards and anti-poaching monitors); Allow access to cultural sites and sustainable use of medicinal and food plant resources, and sustainable use of small game and fish, when it can be properly monitored; Network IP groups living in and around PAs.
Reducing deforestation, mitigating climate change	Benefits from REDD+ will not accrue to IPLCs; Efforts will focus on reforestation rather than conserving forest diversity needed by IPs.	Strengthen the capacity of IPs to obtain and manage CFCs; Learn from IPs about the impact of climate change on key forest resources, then strengthen their capacity to obtain and manage their CFCs; Continue to strengthen IP engagement in REDD+ fora.
Green enterprise development	IPs will not have access to funding, training or markets	Enhance the role of IPs in tourism (example of Volcano Safaris); Provide dedicated funding and capacity building for IP management and enterprises, especially those that will allow them to finance management of CFCs.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Despite their expertise and knowledge of the land, the forest and natural resources, there should be no “IP track” with respect to capacity building. IP engagement in CARPE initiatives should not be limited to maintaining traditional roles and livelihoods. With proper training, IPs can become bookkeepers, teachers and researchers as well as game trackers. Hiring local “intellectuals” who are trusted by the community to collect data and record outcomes, as well as to communicate and support learning, and recommend needed interventions, will yield rich insights as well as building their capacity.

Consider ways to introduce innovation, participation and experimentation into capacity building. Peer to peer learning has proven to be effective for transmission of both traditions and new ideas. A school for IP traditions in Cameroon has been successful in teaching younger Baka the knowledge of their elders

and focusing it on research and conservation actions that the young can participate in (Smith 2019). Supporting IPs in higher education pursuits is another key approach to building capacity.



Master's student, with thesis on conflicts between logging companies and local communities, Mai-Ndombe, DRC
Photo: Robert E. Moïse

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

CARPE should emphasize monitoring for potential harm and risks, including conflict risks, throughout the life of the activity. This monitoring should be directly linked to the consultation process and the ongoing dialogue as a key element of any activity. These factors should be integrated into the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) plan and also the Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring and Plan (EMMP). Link monitoring to social impact assessment that should be carried out before the activity begins. For evaluation, community perceptions of the activity should be considered crucial for success and be one of the primary indicators of success.

Identifying “grassroots indicators” of social and environmental change will make a monitoring plan more robust and useful to local actors. One example is catch or harvest per unit effort, which local hunters and gatherers can track. Such indicators can be useful to science, for example recording change in ecosystems (rainfall, soils) and impacts on species. Social grassroots indicators are equally useful as they can show what people value and what they consider as significant outcomes. These outcomes often go beyond material well-being to respect, pride and opportunity as well as reduction in conflict and harmony with neighbors.

Complexity-aware monitoring is a suite of approaches used extensively by USAID in sectors such as humanitarian assistance and democracy, rights and governance (DRG). As described in USAID’s Policy, Planning and Learning [Program Cycle Note](#), complexity-aware monitoring is appropriate for aspects of strategies, projects or activities where:

- Cause-and-effect relationships are uncertain
- Stakeholders bring diverse perspectives to the situation, making consensus impractical
- Contextual factors are likely to influence programming
- New opportunities or new needs continue to arise
- The pace of change is unpredictable

Three principles underlie complexity aware monitoring: Attend to performance monitoring’s blind spots such as incomplete understanding of context; 2. Synchronize monitoring with the pace of change; and 3.

Consider interrelationships, perspectives, and boundaries. These principles illustrate why such an approach is most appropriate to monitoring engagement with IPLCs. First, performance monitoring stresses quantitative measures, while key measures of engagement with IPLCs are trust and confidence. Second, the pace of change is likely to be slower than that of projects working in less remote areas with tested approaches. Finally, this type of monitoring allows different perspectives to emerge. Refer to the PPL note for further details.

Additional pointers toward building a sound Collaborating, Learning and Adapting practice with IPLCs include:

- Carry out joint project or activity reviews with IPLCs to discuss what is working and not working. Revisit theories of change developed in design or work planning stages and revise based on new information. Ideally, CARPE staff should carry out these reviews independently of the implementing partner.
- Facilitate mutual learning. Both “outside” actors and IPLCs have valuable knowledge. Each side should bring knowledge to the table. Outsiders have valuable knowledge about markets and investments, for example, that they can and should share. Mutual sharing reduces inequalities and builds trust.
- Avoid judgment about attitudes, practices and beliefs. For instance, IPLCs may be concerned about social issues that they depict as sorcery. This does not mean they are ignorant. It means they have social problems and are describing those problems in the mode that everyone in their world understands.

VI CONCLUSION

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities are essential stakeholders and partners in conservation and climate change action in the Congo Basin. As their communities are diverse, engagement will involve learning about the roles of and relations among IPs and Bantu, women, men and youth. Understanding this diversity, and undertaking institutional analyses, while fostering inclusive rights-based approaches that engage the whole community, will build trust and confidence.

Learning the history of the land and the culture of the peoples on the land helps project teams to understand today’s realities. It is also an important entry point for engagement, as both young and old are keen to discuss their history. Integrating this history and vibrant IPLC culture into conservation approaches will spark greater local interest, and ownership, of the efforts.

IPs and LCs have critical knowledge, skills and resources. Some will use these assets to ally with the forces of extraction, even violence, while others are and will be forces for conservation and sustainable management. Strengthening rights, expanding economic options and fostering pride can tip the balance towards peace and conservation. The way the balance tips will determine the fate of wildlife and forests in the region. Engaging IPLCs is thus not idealistic but deeply practical, indeed essential.

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